

CALL FOR MORE FARMS IN THE NORTH WEST TO MILK A DAY FOR ALL IT'S WORTH

A North West farm has taken the plunge into tourism by allowing visitors to literally muck in with what the young farmer normally gets up to during the course of a day's work, having listened to sound advice offered by the North West Farm Tourism Initiative (NWFTI).

Gorstage Green Farm, based in Northwich, Cheshire, is rapidly becoming one of the North West Farm Tourism Initiative's most innovative farms, thanks to the creation of a "Farmer for a Day" package, which offers a visitor the opportunity to shadow young farmer, Charles Davis, during a typical working day. On the back of his success with this venture to date, the North West Farm Tourism Initiative is now appealing for more farms to follow his lead.

Charles Davis has been assisted by Farm Tourism Officer for Lancashire and Cheshire, John Dickinson, who supported him when he diversified into this form of tourism to provide a second income stream for the dairy farm. Charles is now appealing to all the people who've always secretly fancied being a maid-a-milking, or running the gauntlet of the raging bull.

Visitors to his dairy farm mingle with and help to manage his herd of 80 pedigree, Holstein milking cows. The media have been quick to focus on this fact, with a range of journalists from publications such as The Daily Mirror and radio stations like GMR and Silk FM, testing out the experience thus far.

The Farmer for a Day package allows the visitor to spend a day, or half day, on the farm, shadowing the farmer and doing exactly the same work they are carrying out, in the course of their normal working day. This could see them milking the cows, trimming their feet, rounding them up, or even enjoying the dubious pleasure of mucking out the bull, as they mingle with Crosshilllocks Bluebell and her bovine pals, on Carl's farm.

Depending on the time of year, they also potentially be fencing the fields, spreading fertiliser, or stacking straw bales, according to their wishes. The only certain thing is that, if they opt for the full day package, they will be tucking into a typical farmer's lunch down at the local pub, with their mentor in tow, turning perhaps the normal ploughman's lunch into a dairyman's platter.

Following the success of this venture, which brings Charles Davis an additional income stream of around £100 per day per visitor, John Dickinson is now looking to broaden the experience to other types of farm within Lancashire and Cheshire.

John Dickinson says: "We are looking for similar ventures on arable farms, sheep farms and pig farms to help establish a network across the North West. This would enable us to provide the full range of experiences from here in the North West, to those wishing to enjoy life as a farmer.

"The NWFTI covers the whole of Cumbria as well as Lancashire, Cheshire and Greater Manchester and Merseyside, so we are sure that, with a bit of innovation, there are more farmers who could follow Charles Davis' example."

Charles Davis comments: "The visitors we have had here so far have been delighted with the experience that they have enjoyed and have really got stuck in to the workload I have given them. For many, the farm environment is an escape from the office desk, the usual routine and the claustrophobia of the inner city. They are usually pretty reluctant to leave, by the end of their time here.

“It has surprised me how many people want to be a farmer for a day, living a childhood ambition, or just doing something that is completely off their normal radar, but it’s proving a wonderful idea and one that is now contributing to the farm’s income.”

Any farm wishing to find out more about diversifying into tourism with the support of the NWFTI can ring 01942 493415 for more information.

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